

CFSP WATCH 2003

NATIONAL REPORT BELGIUM

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I. Basic views of CFSP/ESDP in Belgium

1. Right from the beginning of the European integration, Belgium has supported each step developing the deepening of the process. In this respect, a common foreign and defence policy is important in order to add elements of a political union to those of economic integration. The Tindemans Report on European Union (December 1975; Leo Tindemans was at the time the Belgian Prime Minister) already asked that “security should not be left outside the scope of the European Union” and warned: “If the European union did not have the means to cover all aspects of our external relations, it would not be equal to its task”. Twenty years later, the Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene expressed still the same position in a speech to the parliamentary assembly of the WEU: “Europe must reinforce its political dimension, which implies the setting-up of a common defence policy. (...) On the long term, indeed, the political integration in a very Union will not be perfected if a security dimension does not exist.”
2. The last Belgian Presidency of the EU took place during the second semester of 2001 and went in continuity. The priorities paper mentioned a will to “reinforce the European voice in the international arena” by enhancing the efficiency and the consistency of the external relations of the EU and its members states.
3. Consequently, the current basic views of CFSP/ESDP of the Belgian government are very clear and can be described as following:
 - (a) To strengthen the role of the High Representative for CFSP and to encourage the dialogue between the latter and the European Commission;
 - (b) To pursue the building of a European security and defence identity;
 - (c) To reach the Headline Goal decided in Helsinki (December 1999) ;
 - (d) To work for the strengthening of the co-operation between the NATO and the EU;
 - (e) To reinforce the EU-capabilities to prevent international crises
4. The Belgian government commits resolutely itself to put forward that the respect of human rights has to become a fundamental principle of the CFSP.
5. Belgium pays attention to the following geographical areas in the scope of CFSP/ESDP:
 - (a) Central Africa: its former colonial area (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi) is a traditional foreign policy issue for Belgium which tries to involve CFSP and the EU in the “Peace” and “democratisation” process and dynamics of the region;
 - (b) Russia: to shape a strategic partnership (importance of energy supplies, specially gas) ;
 - (c) Middle-East: to help every side and each partner to put a end to violence and to find a way of dialogue, negotiation and peace;

- (d) Mediterranean Region: to maintain the dynamics of a important partnership ;
- (e) Balkans / south-east Europe: to promote regional co-operation and economic development in order to “stabilise the European continent”

II. National perceptions/positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP issues

6. The Iraqi crisis (Winter-Spring 2003) gave the opportunity to the Belgian government (and more precisely to the Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt and the Foreign Minister Louis Michel) to assess the evolution and the developments of CFSP/ESDP. The assessment could be summarised in a political credo : “It is necessary to do better!”. Partly for electoral reasons (Elections at the national level were fixed on 18 May 2003), but in accordance with every party of the governmental coalition (socialists, liberals and greens), Belgium took its rank in the so-called “Peace axis” with France and Germany inside the EU and was upset by the “Letter of the Eight” issued in January 2003. The Belgian government do not hesitate to resist to the US pressures in order to foster some principles, namely multilateralism through international organisations and UN international security system.
7. According to the above mentioned attitude, the Prime Minister G. Verhostadt took the opportunity of the turmoil caused by the Iraqi crisis to put on the agenda one of his former idea and organised a “mini-summit” at the Egmont Palace of Brussels with the French President Jacques Chirac, the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the Prime Minister from Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker. The conclusions of the summit are in accordance with the Belgian proposals to re-launch the CFSP/ESDP. In order to give new impetus to the European Security and Defence Policy, the four countries propose that the Convention on the future of the European Union and the Intergovernmental Conference approve the following principles and integrate them into the constitutional Treaty:
 - The possibility of setting up enhanced co-operation in the field of defence.
 - A general clause of solidarity and common security binding all member states of the European Union and making it possible to face all kinds of risks concerning the European Union.
 - The possibility for members states that express the wish to accept supplementary obligations, within the frame of an enhanced co-operation and with no obligations for third parties.
 - Reformulating the Petersberg missions so that the European Union can use civilian and military means in order to prevent conflicts and manage crises, including the most demanding missions.
 - The creation of a European Agency for development and acquisition of military capabilities. The goals of the Agency will be to increase the European military capabilities and strengthen the interoperability as well as the co-operation between the armed forces of the member states. The Agency will help to create a favourable environment for a competitive European defence industry.
 - The creation of a European Security and Defence College in order to favour the development and the spreading of a European security culture.

Moreover, the four leaders propose that the Convention should accept the concept of a European Security and Defence Union (ESDU). As a contribution to the reflection, which they wish to pursue with interested States, they believe the vocation of the ESDU should be to gather those member states that are ready to go faster and further in strengthening their defence co-operation. States taking part into the ESDU will especially:

- Commit themselves to bringing mutual help and assistance in the face of risks of all nature.
- Systematically aim at harmonising their positions on security and defence issues.
- Co-ordinate their defence efforts.
- Develop their military capabilities.
- Increase their security and military efforts, more specifically as to their investment in military equipment.

Participating in ESDU will imply:

- Participating in major European equipment projects such as the A400M.
- Strengthening the efficiency of the European military capabilities, by specialisation and pooling of means and capabilities as much as possible.
- Strengthening the pooling of means for officers training, exercises, engagement and logistics.
- Being willing to take part in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations.

ESDU would be open to all the current and future member states that are ready to join.

With regard to the military field, the four countries have decided, as far as they are concerned, to implement here and now and in the spirit of the Saint-Malo and Köln declarations, a number of concrete initiatives that are meant to bring their national defence instruments further together. These projects intend to prevent useless duplications between national armed forces and thus strengthen the efficiency of Europeans defence capabilities. They are open to all interested current and future member states.

The following initiatives fall within the prospect of their common participation to operations conducted within the framework of the European Union or NATO :

- ◆ The development of a European rapid reaction capability. The progress made in this field will help to achieve the goals of the European Union, to strengthen the European contribution to developing a NATO Reaction Force and to guarantee their interoperability. In order to improve the European rapid reaction capability, they will create a nucleus capability around the Franco-German brigade in which Belgian commando elements and Luxemburg reconnaissance elements will be integrated. This European rapid reaction capability can be reinforced by troops from other interested states and will be available for European operations, NATO operations as

well as operations conducted by the European Union under the auspices of the United Nations.

- ◆ The creation, by June 2004 at the latest, of a European command for strategic air transport, available for European and NATO operations. The A400M-program is crucial for the development of such a European capability for strategic air transport. In the longer term, the four countries envisage to create, with those States taking part in this program, a common strategic air transport unit and place that unit under the European command for strategic air transport. Moreover, they will consider with interested states the creation of a common command for strategic transport (sea, air and ground).
- ◆ The creation of a joint European NBC protection capability in charge of the protection of both civilians and troops, which are deployed within the framework of European operations.
- ◆ The creation, in contact with the Commission and ECHO, of a European system for first humanitarian aid during disasters (EU-FAST – European Union First Aid and Support team) making it possible for the European Union to combine civilian and military assets in order to engage first emergency humanitarian aid within 24 hours. This system will be based on the pooling of existing assets and capabilities. It will be a collective mechanism and the countries that express that wish will alternately be responsible of it. The example to follow in this respect would be the Belgian model of rapid humanitarian intervention called B-FAST.
- ◆ The creation of European training centres : a common tactical training unit for A400M-crews; a training centre for helicopters crews; harmonising sea training curricula for marine CO's in the prospect of the creation of a European school-fleet; harmonising training for Air force pilots by enhancing ongoing initiatives, notably in the field of tactics.
- ◆ The strengthening of European capabilities with regard to operational planning and conducting operations. During the European Council of Köln in June 1999, the member states of the European Union decided to carry out crisis management operations either by using NATO assets or capabilities autonomously.
- ◆ As to the operations having recourse to NATO assets and capabilities, a permanent arrangement has been made between the European Union and NATO. The European operation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is currently carried out in application of that arrangement, which is one of the pillars of the strategic partnership between the European Union and NATO.

As to EU-led operations without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities, and expanding on the different proposals made within the Convention, we believe we must improve EU capabilities with regard to operational planning and conducting operations while avoiding useless duplications and competition between national capabilities. To this end, we propose to our partners the creation of a nucleus collective capability for planning and conducting operations for the European Union. When in use, it will be reinforced by national staff. Open to every member state of the European Union expressing that wish, it would have to establish liaison arrangements with its national counterparts. In order to maintain a close link with NATO, it would also have to establish liaison arrangements

with SHAPE, including its possible use to support DSACEUR in his role as a primary candidate to command EU-led operations having recourse to NATO assets and capabilities.

- ◆ In this spirit and until such a capability will have been created by the European Union, interested states will establish a nucleus of a collective capability which, instead of national means, they would make available to the EU for operational planning and command of EU-led operations without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities. Such a pooling of resources would avoid national duplications and significantly improve interoperability. The decision on the creation of such a capability could be taken by the end of the year with all the interested states, with a view to its installation in Tervuren during the summer of 2004.
This point appears to be one of the most important priorities of the Belgian government.
- ◆ With a view to improving command and control capabilities available to the European Union as well as to NATO, the four Defence Ministers will take the necessary steps to establish, not later than 2004, a multinational deployable force headquarters for joint operations, building on existing deployable headquarters.

<http://diplobel.fgov.be/en/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=6453>)

8. Belgium pleads also for the strengthening of the European pillar of NATO and cautiously does not want to damage the transatlantic relations. The conclusions of the mini-summit do not forget to recall that “the transatlantic partnership remains an essential strategic priority for Europe. This partnership is a necessary condition for security and world peace”.

III. Proposals brought to the European Convention by Belgian representatives with regard to CFSP/ESDP issues

9. The Belgian contribution to the Convention concerning the missions, powers and instruments of the Union has been published on 13 May 2002. This paper recalls most of the elements mentioned above, namely in reaffirming the Union's identity on the international scene and promoting, in its international relations, security, peace, international co-operation, as well as improving fairness in trade and finance.

<http://diplobel.fgov.be/fr/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=202>)

<http://diplobel.fgov.be/en/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=203>)

10. Other proposals initiated by Belgium on the institutional aspects of the EU have been aggregated in the Memorandum of the Benelux entitled “A balanced institutional framework for an enlarged, more effective and more transparent Union” (4 December 2002).

http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/press/oth041202_fr.htm)

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The Memorandum says that the capability of the Union to influence international events is dependent on the cohesion between its internal and external policies, on a common will shared by the institutions and the member states, on the availability of adequate means and on the coherence in voicing the position of the Union :

- The roles of High Representative for the CFSP and Commissioner for External Relations should be performed by a single person (known as “double hatting”), who enjoys the status of Commission Vice President, but operating in the field of CFSP and CESDP under the authority of Council.

The High Representative/Commissioner for External Relations is nominated by qualified majority by the Council in its composition of Heads of State and Government and in accordance with the President of the Commission. He exercises his competencies in accordance with the community procedures or in accordance with the procedures, which apply specifically for the CFSP in function of the field of action concerned. He is discharged of his role as Council Secretary General. He is responsible for the external representation of all issues relating to CFSP or CESDP.

- The Commission performs external representation for all other policies of the Union, as is already the case at the WTO.

Even before the Constitutional Treaty enters into force, the High Representative should be able to participate in the meetings of the Commission. The analysis and policy planning unit, which is already at his disposal, should be reinforced during this period and become a common service for him and the Commission.

After the coming into force of the new treaty, the High Representative must have the right of initiative in the field of CFSP and should be able to refer to the services of the Commission, which for questions related to the CFSP could be reinforced by experts from the member states.

About the Council Presidency, the Benelux is of the opinion that the system of the Council Presidency must be reformed in order to guarantee the effectiveness and the continuity of Council's activities in an enlarged Union. The status quo is no longer a viable option.

At the same time, The Benelux wants to safeguard the principle of equal treatment of all member states, just as the balance between the institutions of the Union.

The Benelux is of the opinion that the proposal of President of the European Council, appointed outside the circle of its members and for a long period, does not come up to these conditions.

In determining the Council Presidency, the role of the Member States must be respected.

The Benelux favours a distinction between the legislative and executive functions within the European Union's institutions.

To this end, the Commission must surely chair the General Affairs Council and the External relations Council. Thus, the President of the Commission must chair the General Affairs Council and the High Representative/ Commissioner for External Relations must chair the External Relations Council.

Furthermore, the Benelux favours maintaining rotation on the level of the European Council and specialised councils. The Benelux will in any case never accept a President elected from outside Council.

11. Belgium pleads for the extension of the use of the QMV and is very concern by the lack of progress on this question during the last European Council.
(http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/other/oth190603_fr.pdf)
12. The Belgian positions have been recalled in the last Contribution of the Benelux, « The institutions of the Union», presented by MM. Gijs de Vries, Jacques Santer and Louis Michel, transmitted to the general secretariat of the Convention in May 2003 (CONV 732/03 – CONTRIB 320).

IV. Mapping of activities in CFSP-related research